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SUCCESS STORY

Promising Darfurian NGO Given Voice at U.N. Human Rights Council



The Darfur International Social Development Agency presented an overview of the humanitarian challenges faced by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in Darfur.

USAID/OTI support helped a local Darfurian NGO participate in the fifth session of the U.N. Human Rights Council in June.

August 2007 – A high priority of the U.N. Human Rights Council is to bring to light the extreme human rights abuses taking place because of the conflict in Darfur. And since July of 2006, the Darfur International Social Development Agency (DISA) has provided the United Nations with significant input on the human rights situation in territories under control of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA). Founded to address the humanitarian needs generated by the conflict in SLA-dominated areas, DISA has worked effectively with little international support in some of Darfur's most isolated communities.

The council, a subsidiary of the U.N. General Assembly, extended an invitation to DISA and 27 other Sudanese organizations to participate in its fifth session focused on

Darfur. The Sudanese Government – itself a party to the conflict – provided support to many of the invitees to attend the session.

To ensure that DISA could participate in the proceedings from an uncompromised position, however, USAID/OTI provided the organization with technical and financial support that enabled its representatives to travel to the June 2007 session in Geneva. DISA's presence provided a unique opportunity to bring genuine civil society voices into the discussions on Darfur – in part to refute repeated government claims that no human rights abuses have been taking place in the war-torn region. DISA's presentation focused on the challenges faced by humanitarian actors in Darfur, including the lack of access to remote areas due to poor security and the splintering of rebel groups. Representatives pointed out that, although many local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able and willing to travel to less secure areas, they rarely receive the funding needed to do so.

In Geneva, DISA was able to network with donors and aid agencies and received invitations to attend Darfur-related events in the future. Supporting a neutral NGO to take part in international processes related to the Darfur conflict is one way USAID/OTI aims to assist a new generation of local NGOs that can protect vulnerable populations and rebuild the region in the aftermath of conflict.